



Michigan Association of School Social Workers

www.masswmi.org

January 18, 2012

The Honorable Tom McMillin, State Representative
Chairperson House Education Committee
P.O. Box 30016
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7514

Dear Representative McMillin and Members of the House Education Committee:

As president of the Michigan Association of School Social Workers (MASSW), I want to express concern regarding SB 619. The MASSW is in favor of providing options to Michigan's students, enabling several paths leading to success in work and citizenship. This current bill simply does not provide the types of accountability and safeguards for students attending Cyber Schools as are afforded students in traditional schools and, additionally, the success rate of Cyber Schools is unproven.

A recent editorial on the Livingston Daily.Com website comments, "The National Education Policy Center claims that only about one in four for-profit companies operating virtual schools across the country met federal No Child Left Behind standards." Of the two Cyber Schools currently operating in Michigan, one has failed to meet AYP.

The MASSW is concerned that some students who exclusively utilize Cyber Schools may lose opportunities to improve on and/or develop necessary social and executive functioning skills needed to fully prepare those students for future success at work and in the community. This concern is especially intensified for those students who have been identified as having learning, emotional or other disabilities.

Successes of virtual schools in Pennsylvania and Ohio have not been fully vetted and results are mixed, at best, regarding the efficacy and wisdom of fully following an "educational innovation" for the sake of innovation itself. It is our hope that the House Education Committee will take a measured approach to the ideas and concepts laid out in SB 619. MASSW opposes this bill as it is currently written. We believe the lack of accountability and safeguards will cause students to lose extremely important aspects of an educational experience needed to fully prepare those taking a cyber school option with the proper foundation for success.

In summary, the MASSW believes a wide range of educational options is appropriate for Michigan's students. We do not believe pursuing these options without a more complete understanding of the consequences of those options is either efficacious or wise.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our thoughts and concerns.

Respectfully Submitted,

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